

James R. Danforth
Groton, Conn.

A REVIEW

OF THE

Congregational Church,

OF GROTON, CONN.,

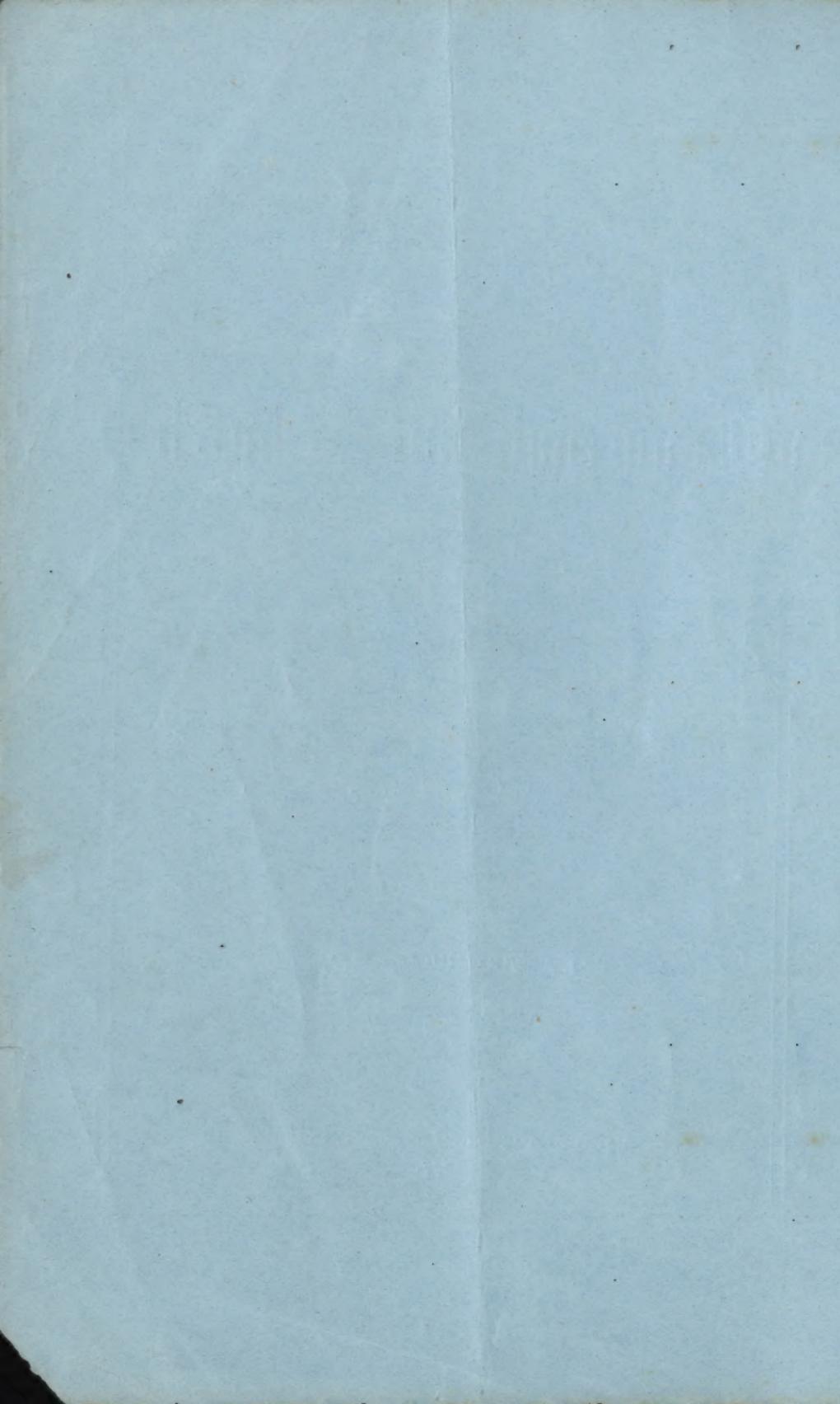
WITH SKETCHES OF ITS MINISTERS.

1704—1876.

BY J. A. WOODHULL, THE PASTOR.

PRESS OF THE NEW LONDON TELEGRAM.

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What is now the town of Groton was a part of Pequot or New London until 1705. It took its name from Groton, England, the birthplace of Gov. John Winthrop, who founded New London in 1646. In a historical address delivered at Groton, Mass., July 4th, 1876, Dr. Samuel A. Green of Boston, says: "The word Groton, the same as Grotena of Domesday Book, probably means Grit-town, or Sand-town from the Anglo-Saxon, *groot, grit, sand, dust*: and *tun*, village, or town. The locality of the English Groton is in fact a sandy one. A proper pride of birth would suggest that the name was also appropriate by reason of the *grit* or pluck, now as well as then characteristic of the people of any town so named." Groton, Mass., it appears was named by a member of Gov. Winthrop's family after the same English town.

But I wish now to speak of the name which our town has itself acquired in history. Lying as it does between the noble streams, the Thames and the Mystic; with its many head-lands stretched forth as arms, embaying so much of the Sound which separates it from Fisher's Island, abounding in so many hills of beautiful prospect, and in so many wide, rich plains of easy culture; with a climate for this latitude, so finely tempered by the neighboring waters, as well as by the direction of its land-slopes; for these among other causes, it was the delightful resort and favorite home of the wild red-man before the coming of the Englishman. We know how inviting it is to the latter unto this day. Two hundred and forty years ago these goodly hills were sentinelled by the powerful Pequot. Adown or across these rapid rivers, he swiftly sent his light canoe, in search, now of his food and now of his foes. Here indeed on Fort Hill was the seat of Indian royalty, and our practice of giving forth from that eminence the laws of the town is less *original* than it is *aboriginal*. The stronghold of the armed Pequots, and of the allied Narragansetts was on Pequot Hill. Hence our soil was made the battle field of the first regular warfare in New England.

May 26th, 1637, seventeen years after the landing of the Pilgrims,

and eighteen years before Carey Latham became the first white resident of Groton, Capt. John Mason with a little army, took and destroyed the fortress of Pequot Hill, thus causing the sudden flight of King Sasacus from Fort Hill and ending the dreadful Pequot power in the colonies. Those whites who came 20 years later to find homes here, plainly reaped from this sowing.

Thirty-nine years after Mason's victory or just two hundred years ago a remnant of the Pequots were led in the war against King Philip by Capt. James Avery of Groton. The death of King Philip made the lives of white people more secure in Eastern Connecticut. Settlers began to multiply on the East bank of the Thames ; and to extend their habitations towards the Mystic, and into North Groton. As they were still within the town of New London, many of them belonged to the Church on the West side, and all were taxed to support the ministry and worship there. No house of worship was yet provided for on this side ; but from an early date, religious meetings were frequent, generally held in private dwellings. In 1684 a new house of worship had been erected in New London and the old one, after standing about 25 years, was sold for £6 to Capt. James Avery. Having separated it into parts he floated it by river, sound and river to his farm in Poquonock, where with additions and improvements it was re-built into a dwelling for his family. When his family moved into it, we can easily imagine that Capt. Avery, speaking for himself and his posterity, might have said, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." As he was an active member of the church, doubtless the old audience room was again often opened for the Social Prayer Meeting, and sometimes for a Preaching Service.

In 1687 it was voted in town meeting that the people on the east side should have "liberty to invite the minister of the town to preach for them on every third Sabbath, during the most inclement months of the year." In 1700 a separate organization was asked for, and this was allowed in 1702, viz : to build a meeting house 35 feet square, to organize a church, to hire a minister and to pay him a salary of £70, the whole expense to be paid by the town. According to the records, the meeting house was built at Center Groton in 1703, and it was ordered by the town, on March 25th, of that year, that 300 acres of land be sold to pay the expense of the building. Perhaps the house was not finished until the next year, since the town voted April 20th, 1704, "that 8 acres of land be sold to Rev. Mr. Ephraim Woodbridge, the proceeds to be applied to finishing the meeting house." The land sold to Mr. Woodbridge, is described as lying "to the west of the meeting house," and must have included the plat upon which the ancient building known as

the Barber house now stands, and this proves that the First and Fourth Pastors of this Church lived nearly on the same spot.

While the town of Groton became legally distinct from New London in 1705, there is strong evidence that the Congregational Church of Groton, was organized with full powers in 1704. On the 8th of November, 1704, Rev. Ephraim Woodbridge, a graduate of Harvard College, was ordained the First Pastor of this Church, and there is no intimation that he was made a colleague of Mr. Saltonstall, the Pastor of New London.

On the 4th of May next preceding, Mr. Woodbridge had been married to Hannah, eldest daughter of Captain John Morgan and granddaughter of James Morgan 1st, who, born in Wales in 1607, came to New London in 1650, and settled in Poquonock in 1657.

Our First Pastor was born at Wethersfield in 1680, the same year with his wife. His father, Rev. John Woodbridge, was settled in that town until his death in 1691. His grandfather and great-grandfather, were each a Rev. John Woodbridge in England. He also had a brother John, who was the first pastor at West Springfield, Mass. Mr. Woodbridge appears to have been greatly respected and beloved by his people, who were really all the inhabitants of the town. To illustrate the truth of this statement, as well as the close connection then existing between the civil and religious affairs, we may peruse with interest the town records of that period.

It was voted April 24, 1704, that "his yearly salary" be increased to £90, in consideration of his providing a house for himself: May 28th, 1706, voted to "cut and cart for Rev. Mr. Ephraim Woodbridge his yearly fire-wood." In the same way, a farm of one hundred acres was laid out for him in 1708, and also £10 were added to his salary, in consideration of his providing his own fire-wood. April 11, 1718, the minister's salary was again increased by £10, making it £100 in all, beside his land.

We find in the Town Records one or two items of more general interest. In 1707 John Davie, a farmer and the first town clerk of Groton, who graduated at Harvard in 1781, came into possession of a vast English estate and a baronetcy. Upon his departure for England, he left a recorded gift of £6 to purchase plate for Mr. Woodbridge's church. This gift has come down to us in the form of a handsome silver communion cup, which is still regularly used in our worship, bearing the following account of itself: "The Gift of Sr. John Davie to the Church of Christ at Groton." Three other cups used by the

church, bear, each the following record: "The Gift of Mr. Elihu Avery to the First Church in Groton, 1748."

It appears from the following item, that the fathers of this town loved not only the Sabbath, Public worship, and good order; but also their own children. April 15th, 1708, "Voted that Edward Spisar take charge of the youth on the Lord's day, that they may not play."

The dismission of Mr. Woodbridge took place some time in 1724, and was apparently sought by himself on account of ill health; for on the 18th of November, 1725, the Town voted that Mr. Dudley Woodbridge, son of the late pastor, be invited to preach at 20 shillings a Sabbath. Whether he did supply the pulpit, by reading his father's sermons, or otherwise, we are not informed. Creditable indeed is the record that on the 11th of August, 1725, £100 or the salary in full, was paid to the late pastor whose decease occurred on the 1st of December of that year. Mr Dudley Woodbridge gives the town a receipt for £100, as Executor of his father's estate. Still again, he signs a similar receipt for £90 on the 25th of May, 1727. Our first pastor left no son as a clergyman; but the second of his 6 children was the father of Rev. Ephraim Woodbridge, the 7th Pastor of the 1st church in New London.

At the close of the first Pastorate of 20 years duration, this Church had 84 members.

In the time honored Cemetery at Poquonock, may be found a plain dark red stone, with the following characters inscribed:

HERE LIES INTERR'D
THE BODY OF THE REV. MR. EPH^M. WOODBRIDGE,
FIRST PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN GROTON,
WHO DIED DECEMBER Y^E FIRST, 1725,
ETATIS SUE 45.

The *Second* Pastor, a graduate of Harvard in 1723, was ordained here November, 22nd, 1727. The Rev. John Owen was born in Braintree, Mass., in 1698: his father Rev. John Owen having emigrated to that place from Braintree, England. Mr. Owen was first married November, 25th, 1730, to Miss Anna, youngest child of Dea. James Morgan, and great-granddaughter of the 1st James Morgan of Groton. Mrs. Owen, who died at the early age of 37, was the mother of five children; one of whom, Mary, married Mr. Simeon Miner, the father of the well-known Dr. John Owen Miner, a noted physician of this county for many years.

The only son, John, a graduate of Yale, was for a long time a teacher and town clerk in New London. Mr. Owen's second wife was the widow of Rev. James Hillhouse, the 1st pastor of Montville. She sur-

vived Mr. Owen and afterwards married Rev. Samuel Dorrance. Upon her tombstone may be found these significant words :

“Here lies one who served near the Altar.”

The period of Mr. Owen’s ministry was eventful for this town as well as for the whole country.

John Seabury, who in 1704 had removed to North Groton from Stonington, was chosen a deacon of this church previous to the year 1713. His son, Samuel, born July 8th, 1706, and graduated at Harvard in 1724, had been received into this church March 3rd, 1727. About that time, he began to preach as Stated Supply to a newly rising Society in North Groton. The same year, a house of worship was there erected. In 1730 he became an Episcopalian, and having received ordination in 1731 from the bishop of London, began his labors as a missionary in New London, early the next year. In the Autumn of 1732 the 1st Episcopal house of worship in New London was completed. A son of Rev. Samuel Seabury, born in Groton, November 30th 1729, also named Samuel, and graduated at Yale in 1748, was likewise ordained in London in 1753 to the Episcopal Ministry of this country.* As the Revolution came on, he being a royalist, was arrested and confined in New Haven. After his release, he resided during the war in New York city. He was chosen Bishop of Connecticut April 21, 1783, and was consecrated to that office at Aberdeen, Scotland, November 14, 1784.

The church in North Grōton was organized late in the year 1729, and the Rev. Ebenezer Punderson was ordained as its first pastor on Christmas day of that year. He, like Mr. Seabury went over to the church of England, and was dismissed February 5th, 1734. Rev. Andrew Croswell was the 2nd, and Rev. Jacob Johnson, the 3rd pastor in North Groton. Mr. Owen and Mr. Croswell appear to have been congenial spirits and zealous co-laborers in the Great Awakening which began about 1740.

In the “Narrative of Surprising Conversions” written by Dr. Jonathan Edwards. November 6th, 1736, we are informed that Mr. Owen of Groton and Mr. Lord† of Preston in Eastern Connecticut paid him a visit in May of that year, at Northampton, to witness the work of God’s Spirit there. The great divine quotes their opinions with much respect. When afterward Rev. James Davenport, a leader of the Separatists, preached to excited crowds in New London and Groton, Mr Owen

*This child, who became the first Episcopal Bishop in the U. S., was baptized by Rev. John Owen, December 14th, 1729.

†Probably Rev. Benjamin Lord of Norwich Town.

warmly co-operated with him ; but plainly did not sympathize with his dangerous errors and disorders.

Our 2nd pastor was zealous in promoting revivals, but not more so than was the renowned Edwards, whose confidence he so much enjoyed and whose soundness none will question. That Mr. Owen's ministry was one of good order fully appears from the Church Records of the time. We find that thorough discipline was then maintained here amounting to separation by this church from " sinful neglecting of the public worship and ordinances of God, drunkenness, vain and disorderly living, vain frolicking &c." We may properly notice a peculiarity in Church order introduced March 11, 1735. " It was voted and agreed that the church should manifest consent in the admission of members by silence." *In the same way*, " messengers" to be sent from the church, at any time, were to be chosen upon the nomination of the pastor. During the 26 years of his ministry 203 members were added to this church, while the youthful Society in North Groton was largely increased, and a Baptist church that had been gathered in this town by Rev. Valentine Wightman, received its share of enlargement. Mr. Owen died " in the harness," and was dismissed by death to a nobler work in eternal rest. His tomb is only a few feet from that of Woodbridge. His head-stone, of fine quality, says most graphically :

" The Rev. and Pious Mr. John Owen, the second ordained minister in Groton, died Lord's day morning Jan. 14, 1753, in ye 55 year of his age."

" Man of God, a faithful seer,
Husband kind, a father dear,
And indeed a neighbor near
Was He, whose clay is lodged here."

The *Third* Pastor of this Church, Rev. Daniel Kirkland, was the 9th child of John and Lydia (Pratt) Kirkland. He was born at Saybrook, June 17th, 1701, graduated at Yale in 1720, ordained the first pastor of the 3rd Church in Norwich—now Lisbon—on the 10th of December, 1723. He had been married, the 15th of July next preceding, to Mary Perkins, who died in Lisbon, October 1st, 1769. In the church book of the Newent Society, in Lisbon, may be found recorded, with his own hand, the names of their 11 children : and following the date of each birth, are the words : " and baptized ye next Lords Day." His fourth son Rev. Samuel Kirkland, born November 20th, 1741, and graduated at Princeton College, N. J., in 1765, became a famous missionary to the Oneida Indians and the founder of Hamilton College, which is located at Clinton in the town of Kirkland, N. Y. Dr. John Thornton Kirkland, a highly distinguished president of Harvard College, and Eliza Kirkland,

the first wife of Prof. Edward Robinson, the Oriental and Biblical scholar, were both children of Rev. Samuel Kirkland. Many other descendants of Rev. Daniel Kirkland have attained eminence in the church or in the state. He was dismissed from the Newent Church January 4th, 1753, and was made pastor here on the 17th of December the next year. For some unknown cause he was dismissed from this Church November 17th, 1757, and returning to Lisbon lived without charge, till his death on the 17th of May, 1773, and so lacked only a few months of being a half century minister. Sprague in his Annals, says "he had a high reputation as a man, a scholar and a minister." His tomb remains among the people of Lisbon, whom he loved so much from first to last.

Rev. Jonathan Barber, our *Fourth Pastor*, was born at West Springfield, Massachusetts, January 31, 1712, and graduated at Yale in 1730. He was licensed to preach in 1732 by the Association of Hampden County, Massachusetts, and entered upon the work at Agawam. In 1734 he was laboring among the Mohegans. As the great revivals of the year 1740 were approaching, Mr. Barber seems to have caught a large measure of the fore-tokening influence. His religious experiences were truly remarkable. With his deepening sense of the great needs of the churches, his faith in God took on more directness in prayer and a growing expectancy. He read the Scriptures to find personal and particular directions of the Spirit. Like many others, he believed that God would cause his kingdom to come with power through the visits of George Whitefield. When the latter first came to New England, he was among the first to welcome the famous preacher at Newport, and to offer sympathy and cooperation. Whitefield was equally sure that Mr. Barber was sent to him under the Spirit's guidance. Henceforth their friendship was mutual, warm, perpetual. Mr. Barber was married November 2d, 1740, to Miss Sarah Noyes, a granddaughter of Rev. James Noyes of Stonington. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Mr. Pemberton in New York City, Whitefield himself being one of the happy witnesses. Soon after this event, Mr. Barber went to Georgia, at the request of his distinguished friend, to take charge of his Bethesda Orphan House near Savannah, and there continued between six and seven years. Early in the year 1747, we find him preaching at Oyster Ponds, now Orient, town of Southold, Long Island. Here on the 9th of November, 1757, he was ordained, but not installed, by the Suffolk Presbytery. His installation as pastor in Groton occurred on the 8th of November, of the next year, and more than ten years after he began his labors at Orient. I have already referred to the Barber house, still to be seen in Center Groton, as standing upon the land once owned by Mr. Woodbridge.

From the Town Records, it is also evident that Mr. Barber purchased the Home place once occupied by Mr. Owen, and hence it is quite probable that these three pastors lived nearly upon the same spot. As might be expected, Whitefield visited Center Groton, February 6th, 1763, and preached in the old Meeting-House. In the following June, he again preached to a vast multitude assembled in front of Mr. Barber's house, while he stood on a platform projected from the second story window.*

Mrs. Barber died May 30th, 1761, aged 47 years. Their children were nine in number, three of whom were born in Georgia, and six at Orient. In the 7th year of his pastorate, it became evident that the severe labors and exciting changes through which Mr. Barber's professional life had passed were quite too severe for his peculiar temperament. Losing the full control of his faculties, he gradually settled into a deep melancholy. The Church Record says, "he was taken off from his usefulness in ye last part of the year 1765." At this time the Second Meeting-House came into being, about three-fourths of a mile East of our present place of worship. After the first one had been used sixty-three years, it was abandoned and the new one was entered on the 21st of June, 1767. Under this date, the Church Records say: "The same day ye Rev. Mr. Jacob Johnson preached ye first sermon ever was preached in the new meeting house in ye first Society of Groton." The Deed for the land, as recorded, is dated May 18, 1769. The pastor was dismissed in December 1768, but death did not relieve him of his mental cloud until the 8th of October, 1783. This faithful and earnest leader of Christ's people, received sixty-one members into this Communion. His sleeping-place beside that of his beloved wife in the Starr Cemetery is marked by an appropriate tablet and register. Thus the graves of Woodbridge, of Owen, and of Barber, are with us still to guard and to love for their sakes. We might go back in spirit and attend the funerals of these men of God. At the death of each, darkness settled upon the town and all were mourners. Yet no hearse came to bear away the dead, and no coaches to carry mourning friends to the burial. Upon a shoulder-bier were the honored remains borne by many chosen pall-bearers, taking turns, while a long procession of footmen followed. No money was wasted on display, but hearty were all the expressions of reverential love.

Next comes the Pastor of the Revolution. Rev. Aaron Kinne was born at Newent in the present town of Lisbon, September 26, 1745, and

*On the 20th of September, 1764, this Church adopted a change in order, by which the rule of receiving candidates into communion by *silence* was exchanged for the present method of admitting propounded persons by a major vote.

graduated at Yale in 1765. He was ordained and made bishop of this people, October 19, 1769, about one year after the dismissal of Mr. Barber and about fourteen years before his death. If we go back just one hundred years, we find ourselves in the midst of stirring scenes. Here as elsewhere the people are conversing in earnest tones about the wrongs they are enduring, but will not long endure. Men are talking of entering the army, and the question is uppermost, "who will care for mother, sister or wife?" Meetings are called and votes passed to relieve of such cares. On the Lord's day, religious meetings are somewhat tinged with politics. If we enter the house of God to worship we shall need to walk the aisle with some reverence, because it is without carpet, and shall lack one temptation to sleep in the pew, viz : a cushion. In the Deacon's seat we may see the venerable Ebenezer Avery, who afterward fell in Fort Griswold. In the other corner is Solomon Morgan, lately elected, and younger, but old enough to have been the pastor's father-in-law, for the past six years. In the pulpit, a man with the vigor of youth, rises to speak and lifts his head well toward the sounding-board. His voice is clear and fills, easily, the room. His whole manner is decided, while devout. Everything he utters is watched, in its bearings upon the war. Words spoken on both sides of the ocean had already come to blows at Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill. What now is the *Word of the Lord*? The preacher's style broadens and kindles with holy patriotism. The singing under *five choristers** with no instrument, is spirited indeed. This was a hundred years ago. Our nation was then born; but our church was then seventy-two years old, and as a religious enterprise, it was ninety years of age. Mr. Kinne had now performed nearly seven years of his ministry under the British crown. Under a new reign, both church and pastor started forth upon this century, which has just been completed. They had now to struggle as a part of the new-born nation, through seven and one-half years for those privileges which were claimed, but not yet granted. They were obliged to try new things. The New Meeting house built in a new location, had not yet won the favor of all. Many in the North-Eastern and Eastern portions of the town had left this for other congregations. But this loss bore no comparison to that one which came by the sad slaughter of the 6th of September, 1781, in Fort Griswold. Concerning this event, I quote the words of a granddaughter of Rev. Aaron Kinne, still living at Tallmadge, Ohio: "I think I have heard my mother say that all of the male members of the church, excepting

*See Church Records of October 31, 1769.

her grandfather, Deacon Solomon Morgan (then a very old man) were killed in the battle at Fort Griswold. My aunt, Nancy Avery, who was the oldest of my grandfather's children—six in number at that time—said she remembered being called a number of times in the night to help her mother carry the babe and lead the child next older, a distance of two miles through the woods to find safety in her grandfather's house. My grandfather's residence was three-fourths of a mile from the fort. On the morning of that fatal day my grandfather upon hearing the alarm guns rose from his bed and went to the fort. *He came back soon and told his wife to prepare for him cordials and linen for the wounded and dying, for said he, 'there will be a fearful battle. Our men are determined to hold the fort, and there are not enough of them ; they cannot do it.' He said afterwards, he believed they would have done it, if their ammunition had not failed. He returned and spent the day, carrying his flag of truce, going to and fro, ministering to the suffering. Meanwhile his family went to Deacon Morgan's together with many other terror-stricken wives and children, for refuge."

What pastor beside this one, ever had sixty widows and three times as many orphans, all made such in one day, looking to him for spiritual consolation? What church has borne a more stunning shock? The voice of weeping and of lamentation, like that in Rama, was heard among these hills and many Rachels refused to be comforted, because of dear ones that were not! The conflicts of the Rev. Aaron Kinne did not close with the war, in 1783. The people being free from the British yoke would now be rid of the English custom of supporting religion by taxation. The dispute over the legal Minister's Rates, was aggravated both by the decrease of monied ability and by the increase of Separatists. The errors which James Davenport had sown forty years before this time, were now well grown, and abundantly ripening. When Mr. Kinne favored the application of law in *collecting* as well as in *assessing* the Rates, some influential persons set up another Religious Meeting in the "great room" of the historical "Avery Mansion." From such a beginning in 1784, we are told that the proprietor of that dwelling gradually advanced to the title of *Elder Park Avery*. Among the trials of that day, a very inflated and uncertain currency, made itself felt much, and often. Surely here was enough pressing upon the spirit to bring, at least, a wreath of cloud upon the brow. In 1793 and 1794, Mr. Kinne was preaching as a missionary in the region of the Mohawk river, State of New York. To such a Service he was appointed by the

*She informs us that he was Chaplain to the garrison.

General Association of Connecticut, and was allowed five dollars a Sabbath, and also four dollars to hire a supply for his pulpit at home.* Thus he soon appeared upon the crest of every wave that had, for a time, swept him from his standing place. It seems to be due to his faith and energy under a gracious Providence that "Ichabod" was not written upon this church as upon the one in North Groton. Fitting it was that his pastorate of twenty-nine years should be surpassed in length by none, throughout the unbroken life of this church for one hundred and seventy-two years. It is a matter of deep regret that we have no Church Records, (with slight exceptions) concerning his Pastorate—not even the name of a person received into membership. From other sources we learn that like Mr. Owen he married a Miss Anna Morgan of this town. The marriage occurred May 31, 1770. Their children, 11 in number, were all born in Groton. After Mr. Kinne's dismission on the 15th of November, 1798, he supplied the pulpit at Winsted, and removed with his family to that place. In 1804 he removed to Egremont, Massachusetts, and in 1806 to Alfred in the same county. He was subsequently employed by the Massachusetts Missionary Society to preach at Mount Washington, and in several other destitute places. About this time he published a work on the "Sonship of Christ." In 1813, he published a book on the "Prophecies;" in 1814 a work upon "Types and Prophecies and Revelation;" in 1821, an Essay upon "The New Heavens and Earth." On the 14th of July, 1824, he died of apoplexy at the house of his son-in-law, Dr. Amos Wright, in Tallmadge, Ohio, being at the time in the eightieth year of his age, and in the fifty-fifth of his ministry. His tomb is in the Tallmadge cemetery.

After the dismission of Mr. Kinne this church was destitute of a settled minister for thirteen years, and during this period the whole town suffered much lack of religious privileges.

Rev. Timothy Tuttle, the *Sixth Pastor*, was born at East Haven, November 29, 1781—a few weeks after the horror at Fort Griswold. Being the youngest of a family of eight children, he remained at home until his eighteenth year. That year, 1799, he removed with his father, Joseph and his mother Mary to Durham. His early education was no more than common, except that his faithful mother gave him thorough instruction in the Assembly's Catechism on Sabbath afternoons. In 1803, while he was teaching in Durham, the place was blessed with a revival of religion. Many persons pressed upon him, his personal need and the Saviour's claim. A female friend, between whom and himself

*See Minutes of General Association, and also the Records of this Society.

a mutual affection had sprung up, urged his immediate acceptance of Christ. On the first Sabbath of November, 1803, he joined the Congregational church in Durham, then under the pastoral care of Rev. David Smith. By the advice and help of his pastor, he was led to change his plans for life, and instead of becoming a carpenter's apprentice, as he had expected, he entered Yale college and graduated in 1808. The next May he was licensed to preach, having studied theology with Mr. Smith. In 1810 he began his work in North Groton and in this place. In the preceding February the 15th, he had been married to Miss Mary Norton of Durham, the very friend, who seven years earlier had led him to the Savior. This most useful woman died in Ledyard, February 14, 1856, about eight years before her husband's entry into his rest. Previous to her funeral, while viewing her remains, he quietly remarked to a friend, "That woman preached the first sermon that I ever *heard*." When, on one occasion, his brethren expressed surprise at his comfortable circumstances, he promptly replied : "That woman did it." Upon her monument the people of Ledyard say of her : "Her record is in the Lamb's Book of Life."

On the 14th of August, 1811, took place Mr. Tuttle's ordination in the Kinne Meeting House. The Congregation, from all parts of the town, was large. After the Sermon, by Rev. David Smith, he was installed over the two churches of Groton and North Groton. This church then had only twenty-seven members. In North Groton, a church of five members had been organized a few months before by Mr. Tuttle's influence. From the dismission of Rev. Jacob Johnson in 1772 to this time, that part of the town had been a moral waste, without a pastor for thirty-nine years, and the church had become extinct. Mr. Tuttle preached to each congregation on alternate Sabbaths, but chose his home in North Groton, which became the town of Ledyard. When he was settled this country was preparing for its second war with Great Britain, which was declared, in behalf of sailors' rights and free commerce, and fairly begun the next year. Special suffering was the consequence upon this town, which has always been the home of so many sea-faring men. The mouth of the river, was blockaded by British vessels of war, and our own shipping fled up the stream toward Norwich. With sad recollections of 1781, old Fort Griswold was again manned and strengthened, while the females of this village, with their valuable goods, fled from their homes. Both pastor and people were sorely tried. In 1818 Mr. Tuttle opened the first Sabbath Schools, ever held in this town and as he believed, the first ever held in this county. These were conducted in the school houses without much organization ; the exercises consisting chiefly of the recitations of Scripture texts, and the answering

of questions previously given in writing to the classes. The pastor, by virtue of his office, was the superintendent. He was especially aided by Othniel Gager, Esq., now clerk of the city of Norwich ; by Ebenezer Learned, Esq., of New London ; by Augustine Chester, Esq., and Miss Nancy Fish, both of this place. We know not just when the Sunday School entered the Kinne Meeting House, where we know it was accustomed to assemble, during the last years of worship there. About the same time with the rise of our Sunday School tributaries, the box stove found its way into the Lord's house, and the stove-pipe began to look out at the window. I say, *found its way*, for at first, it had to face powerful foes, who viewed it as a dark dispensation. Sometimes, without any fire, it caused too much heat, and filled many eyes with imaginary smoke. More than once, the house was filled with real smoke ; yet we do not hear that the pastor ever omitted any service because the room was uncomfortable, or the weather too severe. After the divine example, he fulfilled his *word*, and with punctual regularity, often made his way through storm, or drifting snow, to the Lord's house. He thought the few, who did attend at such times, deserved quite as much as the multitude of fair weather church goers. If he did not give his best sermons on rainy days, as a certain eccentric divine always did, he certainly did not, on such occasions give his poorest. On the 6th of September, 1821, Mr. Tuttle delivered, in the Old Fort, from 2 Samuel 1 : 12, the “*anniversary sermon*,” which, by request, was published, and is still extant. The annual notice of the massacre, by some memorial service, was continued with interruptions, until 1826, when our nation was fifty years old, and the corner stone of our famous Monument was laid. In 1825, this society received by Will, from William Woodbridge, Esq., of Stonington, the sum of Five hundred dollars, on condition that Five hundred dollars should be added and that the amount be invested as a permanent fund. This fund has since grown to the sum of Eleven hundred dollars. Mr. Tuttle's pastorate here covers a period of 23 years, during which 69 members were added to the church. The years 1814 and 1831 were specially marked by revivals. From the church Record we learn that, under this ministry, discipline was faithfully maintained against lying, intemperance, absence from worship and other offences. In 1830, the people began to discuss the matter of repairing their Meeting House, which had now been used 63 years, just as long as their first house of worship. After the second building had been used about 67 years, the third house of worship was dedicated near the close of 1833. Mr. Tuttle was dismissed from this field, April 2nd, 1834, at his own request, that he might give himself wholly to the North Society, and that this people might have the full service of a pastor. From Ledyard, he

was dismissed by the Master's call to take the crown, June 6th, 1864, in the 83d year of his age, and in the 55th of his entire ministry. His sleeping dust is deposited beside the tomb of her, whom he so highly prized on earth, and "he being dead, yet speaketh." From his monument in Ledyard, he ever says to the people of both towns "Remember the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you." From Mr. Tuttle's dismissal in 1834, this church was without a pastor for five and a half years. During the first part of this interval Rev. Joseph A. Copp, a native of this town, supplied the pulpit with marked success. He afterward fulfilled a useful ministry of sixteen years at Sag Harbor, Long Island, and one of thirteen years at Chelsea, Massachusetts, where he died November 7th, 1869. He was followed, in this church, for a few months by Rev. Ashley M. Gilbert. It was during his term of service that our Female Prayer meeting took rise as an institution. Rev. T. L. Shipman "whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the Churches" of this county, also labored here during that period. Rev. Mark Mead, who has ministered to several other churches in this state, filled the vacancy to the next pastorate.

On the 9th of October, 1839, Rev. Jared R. Avery was installed as the *Seventh Pastor*. It seems highly befitting that a lineal descendant of Capt. James Avery, one of the founders of this town, and of this church, should have been chosen to this office. He was born in this place September 17, 1804; graduated at Williams College in 1830; ordained October 17th, 1833, at Auburn, New York, where he graduated in Theology. He immediately entered upon an agency for the American Tract Society. In this service he spent two years in the Southern States, and three in New England. He was married July 23rd, 1835, to Mrs Sarah Agnew, formerly Miss Skidmore of Louisville, Kentucky. Their children are seven, three of whom have passed away from the earthly living. The beginning of Mr. Avery's ministry here, was the opening of a new era, or rather the renewal of an old one, after an interval of forty one years. Mr. Tuttle had spent only one half of his Sabbaths with this people, and beside, his residence was in North Groton. Now they could hear the Word preached every Lord's day, from a pastor living among them. The prayer meeting at mid-week could be more regular, and all kinds of pastoral labor and care could be received. The Female Prayer meeting now grew in numbers, and became a means of spiritual power. By honoring the appointed ordinances of her Great Head, the church received His signal reward. In 1842. a revival of great power was felt in this community, and the following year was one of great ingathering. One of the results was the formation of the Baptist church in this village, in whose spiritual growth, we heartily rejoice.

Another fruit of that revival and a strong proof of its genuineness, was the increase of the spirit of Benevolence among the people. At this time, collections for charitable objects grew into practice, and regularity. We find that on the 29th of January, 1845, the church, by vote, adopted a schedule of benevolent giving, and this too, while she was receiving aid from the Connecticut Home Missionary Society to support her own pastor. The amount of aid received from 1841 to 1850 was Seven hundred and twenty dollars. During this pastorate the Sabbath School work received a fresh impetus, and organized efforts in behalf of the Temperance Reformation, were begun. This ministry which lasted for twelve years, welcomed sixty-five members to the church. The dismissal of Mr. Avery was at his own request, and occurred April 15th, 1851. He has since been settled at Franklin, in this county, for several years. He now tarries in our midst through the peaceful evening twilight of his useful life. For a long time, may we hear his voice in counsel and feel the influence of his example, and of his prayers.

The *Eighth Pastor* of this church, Rev. George H. Woodward, was installed October 7th, 1851, after having fulfilled a settled ministry of thirteen years at Stafford. He was born, April 24th, 1807, at Hanover, the seat of Dartmouth College, whose founder and first president, Dr. Eleazar Wheelock, was his great-grandfather. In 1831, he took his first degree at Dartmouth and began to study Theology at Princeton. His connection with the seminary there, embraced the first two years of his theological course of study. In the meantime, he undertook with much success, the establishment of a high school at Shrewsbury, New Jersey, of which he was the Principal for four years. The time thus spent was not lost ; but filled with useful preparation for the chosen work of his life. In 1833, he was licensed to preach by the New Brunswick Presbytery, and from that time often filled the pulpit in addition to the teacher's chair. His wife was Miss Annette Farrar of Derby, New Hampshire, to whom he was married while teaching in Shrewsbury. Their children have been three sons, who are still living, and two daughters, who have departed this life. Mr. Woodward spent his last year of theological study at East Windsor in this state, where he graduated in 1837. On the 4th of October of that year, he was ordained at Trenton, New Jersey, by the New Brunswick Presbytery. At this time he began to preach as stated supply in Stafford, Connecticut, and was installed pastor of the church in January 1839. His ministry in Groton was marked with successful progress, and continued four years and a half. Within that period, our Articles of Faith and our Covenant were revised, printed with proof-texts, and circulated among the members of the Church ; a committee of three persons was appointed to promote church discipline ;

and a decided improvement was manifest in the charitable contributions of the people. He welcomed twenty four new members into this church. His resignation came unexpectedly, and was reluctantly accepted by the people. The Council with still more reluctance severed the union January 10th, 1856, and he at once entered upon a field of labor in Iowa, finally settling at Toledo, then a small place and morally destitute. Mr. Woodward retired from the active ministry ten years ago ; but still enjoys the hearty love of his former people, and at Toledo waits the call of the Master to his final rest.

After Mr. Woodward's dismission from Groton, this pulpit was supplied for five years by Rev. Sylvester Hine, now of Higganum. He was ordained October 19, 1848, and settled at Ticonderoga, New York. He had also preached in Palmer, Massachusetts, before he began his ministry in this place. Having graduated from Yale in 1843, he studied Theology at East Windsor. His wife was Miss Ann G. daughter of Rev. Newton Skinner of New Britain. Their children are two in number. During the five years of his ministry here, forty members were added to the church and many marks of his earnest fidelity remain. He was succeeded by Rev. Thomas Tallman, who supplied the pulpit for about three years ; making in all, an interval of the pastorate during eight years.

On the 29th of June, 1864, Rev. Samuel W. Brown was installed as the *Ninth* Pastor of this people. He had performed already, a ministry of two years and five months at South Coventry. Born in Winchendon, Massachusetts, April 7th, 1828, and graduated from Yale College in 1850, he entered upon the study of law in Philadelphia ; but soon turned to teaching for the means of pursuing his studies. He taught in the state of New Jersey, and at Matagorda, Texas, until the spring of 1855. Being then twenty-seven years of age, he was still unacquainted with Christ as his Savior, and yet the Holy Spirit had arrested his attention to the truth. As one lost he was inquiring for the way. These impressions were greatly deepened by a terrible storm, which in the autumn of 1854, came near destroying Matagorda with its inhabitants, and the people of the vicinity. Many lives were swept away : but Mr. Brown was spared and more, he was providentially the instrument of saving the lives of more than thirty individuals. Such peril brought him vividly to feel God's care and power over him, and to cry earnestly to Him for *eternal life*. The event also fore-shadowed his instrumentality in saving many souls from a more terrible destruction. He returned to the North and resumed his Law studies, but with a growing dissatisfaction with his present plans for life. On the 21st of October, 1855, Mrs. Marianna W. Moore, formerly Miss Ward, of Rindge, New Hampshire, became his wife. Soon afterward he resolved fully to follow the Savior and manifested a

growing interest in the study of God's word. Not yet hearing distinctly any call to the gospel ministry, in January, 1856, he entered upon Mercantile business in Ludlow, Vermont. His earlier life had been often free and gay, while it had ever been amiable and social. Now Divine truth was bringing him into beautiful order, and Divine grace was fast developing in him a solid christian character. In the summer of 1858, he closed his business in Ludlow, and leaving his wife and two children with friends, found his way into the Theological Seminary at Chicago. In May, 1859, he was providentially led to exchange the Chicago for the Andover Seminary and there he remained until 1861. On April 23rd, of that year, he was licensed to preach. His ordination as an evangelist occurred at Rindge the next December 31st, and early in 1862 his labors began at South Coventry. He entered upon his pastorate in Groton, young in the ministry and with all the ardor of youth in grace. In this place, he was "a burning and shining light," two years and a half. Next to the monument which he built in the hearts of his people, the Groton Bank Union Temperance Society stands to record his useful enterprise.* Never before were the charities of this people so large as during this Pastorate and rarely has more christian union been manifested in this church. When disease came to him, it cut short many plans of doing good, deeply cherished in his heart. The master's call from the field to our Father's house, found him not thinking much of rest, but of *more work*. When the summons were made positively plain, he said, "I have given it all up now," and soon fell asleep in Jesus, November 9th, 1866. His companion and two of his children survive, while two others went home before him. During his brief and bright term of service, thirty persons became members of the church, which is an increase of twelve each year. No one before him except Mr. Owen, had been dismissed by death from this pastorate. Those who knew him can heartily adopt the words that speak from his tomb-stone in South Coventry; "I thank my God upon every remembrance of thee."

The *Tenth Pastor* Rev. Joseph E. Swallow, a graduate of Dartmouth College, was installed June 11th, 1867. He was ordained July 18th, 1848, and had served several churches in Massachusetts and New York. During his ministry in Groton, about \$10,000 were expended in enlarging and improving the House of Worship, and the congregation was largely increased. Mr. Swallow was also active and zealous in trying to promote public education in this town. The erection of the School Building now used in this village, is said to have been largely due to his efforts. He received into Church fellowship nineteen persons. His dis-

*This society now eleven years old has a membership of about Four hundred.

mission took place July 1st, 1870, after which he preached for some time at Falls Village, and in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. He is now the Acting Pastor in Alford, Massachusetts.

After Mr. Swallow's dismission, an interval of Supply lasted one year and a third. Among those who occupied the pulpit stately, were Mr. Charles Gaylord, now a practising physician in Meriden, and Rev. Moses H. Wilder of that place. During this interval fourteen members were received, by profession, into the church.

Rev. James B. Tyler was ordained as the *Eleventh* Pastor of the church September 27th, 1871. He was a graduate of Yale College in 1864, and of the Yale Theological Seminary in the same year that he was settled in the ministry. His death occurred on the 28th of May, 1872, taking him from a ministry of eight months in this Church to the nobler service of the Church triumphant. Since the Memoirs of Mr. Tyler's life and ministry have been so well written by Rev. J. H. DeForest, it seems unnecessary to dwell upon the subject here. His early removal is a mystery which only heaven can explain. He came to his work in physical weakness, but in intellectual strength; and laid upon the altar much culture, enriched by true genius, with all the frankness of a child. Judging from the extent and rapidity of his growth here, how rich must be his unfolding ripeness in eternal glory. Mr. Tyler received four persons into the church. After his death the pulpit was supplied for five months, by Rev. E. E. Hall of Fair Haven.

The labors of the present Pastor, who is the *Twelfth*, began the first Sabbath of November, 1872. His installation occurred on the 24th of December, 1873. He has welcomed thirty-nine members to the church.

During the space of one hundred and thirty years from its beginning the Church occupied two Houses of Worship, in which six different pastors broke to them spiritual bread. Forty-two years have elapsed since the present House of Worship was dedicated, and also during this period, the Church has had six pastors, besides nine Stated Supplies and many occasional Supplies. The whole number of members enrolled, exclusive of those received by Mr. Kinne, is *Seven hundred and twenty-four*, which is at the rate of four and a quarter for each of the one hundred and seventy-two years. The number enrolled during the last forty-two years is *Two hundred and eighty-two*, which is at the rate of six and three-quarters for each year.

It is the province of History to disclose those moral treasures which God has in His good Providence laid up among men for their profitable use. To this church, treasures have been intrusted, for the enriching of mankind. One of these treasures is a most *Noble Ancestry*. Those men and women who, on the 8th of November, 1704, in this town, entered in-

to solemn Covenant with one another, with their new Pastor and with God to worship and live as a band of Christians, were children of some of the best early settlers upon the shores of Massachusetts Bay. They had the best blood of Old England in their veins. They belonged to that class "by whom alone" says Hume "the precious spark of liberty had been kindled and was preserved, and to whom the English owe the whole freedom of their Constitution." It may be said also that they belonged to that class, who gave character to this nation now so gloriously celebrating its finished Century. Their minds and hearts were largely formed by the word of God.* They attended to the affairs of time in full view of eternity.

This church is rich in her *Noble Posterity*. Five or six churches in this town and two or three in Ledyard are her daughters or granddaughters. Many of the most useful men and women, who have been blessings in this and other countries, have derived religious training or influence from her. From her the Episcopal Church in New London received her first Missionary and Stated Minister. From her, the Episcopal Church in this country received its first Bishop. Since her daughters and sons too are Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal &c., as well as Congregationlist, she seems to be a true *Catholic* mother in the Household of faith. She has given to the world seven ministers, whom we can name, and doubtless many whose names we have not, were partially her gift. She has been rich in *Trials*. These have arisen from the Revolutionary War, especially the massacre at Fort Griswold; from her connection with sea-faring life; from emigration; from colonization, and from the causes of trial that generally operate. Her male membership has generally been small proportionately. At present it is only *one-fifth* of the whole. In such a case, it is not so easy for the brethren to give away their responsibilities, while there is more occasion for the sisters to be active.

This Church has been enriched by many *Precious Revivals of Religion*. These have marked her whole history. They have added to her membership, to her strength, to her usefulness. It is safe to say that she has been dependent upon them for continued existence. That she has been and has done what a church should, is "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." This church has been enriched by an *Educated and Faithful Ministry*. Its pastors have all been graduates of college, and not one of them ever proved himself unworthy of the Gospel Ministry; while as a class they have been singularly devoted to

*A very costly bible, which was printed as early as 1580 and brought from England by Christopher Avery, has been brought down to the present time, by Will in the Avery family. It bears the quaint title of "The Breeches Bible."

the honor of Christ in the saving of men. Finally to this church has been given a *Growing Spirit of Charity*. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three ; but the greatest of these is charity." It is a sign of grace to impart good gifts to others. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." For further particulars of this growth see the Tabular Statement. With a *Past* so full of blessing and attainment, the *Future* of this religious household should be *grand* in holy usefulness. History should direct and support Prophecy ; experience ought to work out hope. The treasures already deposited should be so used as to increase in growing proportions. If we do not *more* than our fathers, we really do *less*. We are "sent to reap that whereon we bestowed no labor ; other men labored and we are entered into their labors."

Ministers raised up under the influence of this Church :

1. Joseph Morgan, born November 6th, 1671. Pastor of First Church in Greenwich, 1697 ; Second Church in Greenwich in 1700 ; preached in Bedford, New York, in 1699 ; in Freehold, New Jersey, in 1709 ; in Hopewell and Maidenhead, New Jersey, in 1736. Deposed and restored. Published several sermons.
2. Samuel Seabury, born in North Groton, July 8th, 1706, began to preach there in 1727.
3. Elisha Fish, the pastor in Upton, Massachusetts, for forty-four years from 1751 to 1795. There he died at the latter date. Two of his sons fitted for the ministry and one daughter married a minister.
4. Solomon Morgan, the pastor at Sterling in Voluntown (Nazareth Church) from 1772 to 1782 ; at Canterbury from 1783 to 1797 ; at North Canaan from 1798 to 1804, where he died.
5. Jared R. Avery, the pastor in Groton from 1839 to 1851, and in Franklin.
6. Colby C. Mitchell, a missionary in Turkey from 1840 to 1841, when he died in Turkey, aged twenty-seven years.
7. Frederick D. Avery, the pastor in Columbia from 1850 to the present time.

The Deacons of this Church with the Date of their appointment so far as known :

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| James Morgan, | |
| Andrew Lester, | |
| William Morgan | |
| John Seabury, | |
| Solomon Morgan, | |
| James Avery, | August 1, 1748 |
| John Ledyard, | August 1, 1748 |
| Nathan Smith, | August 1, 1750 |
| Ebenezer Avery, | August 2, 1759 |
| Solomon Morgan, | June 24, 1774 |
| Samuel Edgcomb, | September 17, 1780 |
| Gilbert Smith, | April 18, 1812 |
| Ebenezer Avery, | April 1, 1815 |
| Elisha Chester, | April 1, 1815 |
| Augustine Chester | November 1, 1834 |
| William P. Harris, | April 12, 1841 |
| Erastus Avery, | January 29, 1845 |

The Superintendents of the Sabbath School with the Dates of their beginning service :

| Superintendent. | Year. | Superintendent. | Year. |
|------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|-------|
| Timothy Tuttle, | 1818 | Albert L. Avery, | 1854 |
| Augustine Chester, | 1835 | William P. Harris, | 1864 |
| Albert L. Avery, | 1836 | Christopher L. Avery, | 1865 |
| Erastus Avery, | 1837 | William D. Harris, | 1871 |
| Albert L. Avery, | 1838 | John J. Copp, | 1872 |
| Simon Huntington, | 1844 | William D. Harris, | 1873 |

Offerings from this Church for Home and Foreign Missions as reported for the past *twenty-seven* years and for all Charities for the past *nine* years.

| Year. | Amount. | Year. | Amount |
|------------|---------|-----------|--------|
| 1850..... | \$ 9.40 | 1864..... | 49.06 |
| 1851..... | | 1865..... | 220.65 |
| 1852..... | 52.37 | 1866..... | |
| 1853..... | 111.10 | 1867..... | |
| 1854..... | 60.56 | 1868..... | 215.57 |
| 1855 | 48.81 | 1869..... | 157.98 |
| 1856..... | 58.80 | 1870..... | 156.50 |
| 1857..... | 40.59 | 1871..... | 184.25 |
| 1858..... | 60.48 | 1872..... | 210.58 |
| 1859..... | 22.27 | 1873..... | 384.32 |
| 1860..... | 44.63 | 1874..... | 363.57 |
| 1861..... | 58.18 | 1875..... | 310.00 |
| 1862 | 45.49 | 1876..... | 312.00 |
| 1863..... | 47.49 | | |

For all Charities for *nine* years:

| | | | |
|-----------|----------|------------|--------|
| 1868..... | \$250.00 | 1873 | 533.00 |
| 1869..... | 212.00 | 1874..... | 789.50 |
| 1870..... | 200.00 | 1875..... | 508.00 |
| 1871..... | 184.25 | 1876..... | 450.00 |
| 1872..... | 211.10 | | |

